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OO RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #1359/01 2411515
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 291515Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8332
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 001359

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: AU ENVOY: CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, COMPENSATION
"DOABLE" AT DARFUR TALKS

REF: KHARTOUM 01337

Classified By: DCM Roberto Powers, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

11. (C) At the tail-end of his recent visit to Sudan, AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim told the international community in Khartoum that agreement on a cessation of hostilities and compensation between Sudan and Darfur's rebels were "doable" outcomes for the UN/AU-led negotiations scheduled to begin in October. He called on Europe to "use its influence" to press intransigent rebel leader Abdulwahid al Nur to participate in the political process and noted that Abdulwahid's Fur constituency shared the concerns of Darfur's other ethnic groups: security, compensation, power-sharing, and return to their villages. In an attempt to clear the air with the SPLM, Salim had voiced support for their proposed meeting in Southern Sudan to unite the fractured rebel movements. However, UN and working-level AU officials admit privately that Salim prematurely gave this support, given the difficulty of uniting JEM with the SLM factions (or even getting JEM representatives to come to Juba) and the SPLM's questionable credibility among many of the rebel groups. End summary.

Talks Should Focus on Security, Compensation

12. (SBU) During an August 28 briefing for the Khartoum diplomatic corps at the end of his six-day trip to Sudan, African Union Special Envoy for Darfur Salim Ahmed Salim said that the AU, UN and the international community should prioritize its goals for the outcome of the political negotiations scheduled for October. The focus should be on achieving a cessation of hostilities and addressing the issue of compensation, according to Salim. While admitting that his past experience on the Darfur file "has taught me not to prophesize," he characterized a cessation of hostilities between the Darfur rebel movements and the Sudanese Government "as the first point of agreement for a successful peace process." He said agreement on both issues was "doable" during the upcoming talks.

Abdulwahid is Europe's Responsibility

13. (C) Responding to a question from the Rwandan Ambassador about Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction leader Abdulwahid al Nur's role in the peace process, Salim asked for the help of European governments in preventing Abdulwahid from "holding the process hostage" by setting impractical conditions for his participation. "Simply use your (Europe's) influence to encourage him to join the peace process--and certainly not to use a European capital to mount a campaign against it." (Note: In a meeting with Poloff on August 29, a senior UN official suggested that international consensus on expelling Abdulwahid from Europe if he continues to obstruct the peace process would be a positive outcome of the September 21 high-level meeting on Darfur preceding the UN General Assembly. End note.)

Fur's Concerns "Identical" to Rest of Darfur

14. (SBU) Salim's recent visit to Sudan included trips to El Geneina and Zalingei in West Darfur as part of a UN/AU strategy to engage Darfurians allied with Abdulwahid (reftel). While internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Zalingei refused to meet with Salim based on a widespread resentment toward the AU, Fur leaders were included in a subsequent meeting in El Geneina. Salim described their concerns as identical to those he had heard in previous visits to North and South Darfur: security; compensation; power-sharing to address the marginalization of Darfurians, particularly in the central government; and the desire to return to their villages.

Clearing the Air with the SPLM...

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15. (C) On August 24, Salim had also traveled to Juba to meet with First Vice President Salva Kiir, Minister in the Office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Luka Biong Deng, and Vice President of the GoSS Riek Machar--who has taken a lead role on the Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) initiative for Darfur. Salim said these meetings had "cleared the air," after the SPLM had earlier blamed the UN/AU for undermining their initiative to prepare the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories for negotiations.

...But SPLM Must Act Soon

16. (SBU) The SPLM had proposed a meeting of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the factions of the SLM, including Abdulwahid. Salim said he had voiced support for the SPLM meeting--"they're free if they want to try to organize the movements"-- provided it was held within the next two weeks. "Otherwise we will need to look at other options." Salim said that prior to his trip to Juba, the UN/AU had planned to convene a meeting of the movements in early September to organize the factions' negotiating team. After addressing the internal fissures of the rebel groups, the UN/AU then intended to conduct "bilateral" consultations with the factions before the October negotiations to flesh out their specific demands and lay a foundation for the talks.

NCP Flexible on Date, Venue for Talks

17. (SBU) The AU Envoy reiterated the UN/AU's focus on determining a venue and start date for negotiations by early September. Salim had met with President Bashir on August 27 and "found the President having a flexible approach to these issues." Based on his discussion with Bashir, Salim said

that the National Congress Party (NCP) was concerned that foreign governments were not exerting sufficient pressure on the rebel movements to come to negotiations. Sudan feared a repetition of the DPA, where holdout rebel factions refuse to sign an agreement and then "are not discarded by those outside."

No Strategy for Civil Society, IDPs

18. (SBU) The UN/AU have not yet defined the level of participation of civil society groups, traditional leaders, and IDPs in the talks, according to Salim, but "we have concluded they must be involved." The Nigerian Ambassador questioned whether it was realistic to include all of these groups' views in the political process given the current timeframe. While Salim acknowledged that the Government and the rebel factions would be the primary stakeholders and that the participation of civil society should not be "overdone," he said that the UN/AU wanted their role to be more than just "symbolic." "We do not, however, have a strategy for this yet," he explained.

Comment

19. (C) Salim's description of UN/AU plans to facilitate more organization within the rebel factions and then convene bilateral consultations with them prior to negotiations is consistent with the USG-proposed "shuttle diplomacy" approach. However, UN officials complain privately that Salim prematurely agreed to the SPLM meeting--and later had second thoughts about his support for it--due to the difficulty of uniting JEM with the SLM factions, the SPLM's questionable credibility with many of the Darfur movements, and JEM's continued refusal to attend meetings in Southern Sudan. The UN--and even working-level AU officials--predict the SPLM effort will fail, having cost the mediators valuable time to conduct shuttle diplomacy. A more realistic approach might be for the USG to encourage the SPLM to support a UN/AU-organized meeting outside Sudan to promote unity within the SLM. The SPLM could play a lead role in such a meeting by articulating their own history of disunity and the lessons

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learned from their years of negotiations with the NCP. The meeting would benefit from UN/AU logistical and financial support and might draw out Abdulwahid--who continues to list security as a reason he cannot participate in meetings in Sudan. End comment.
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